

Message Text

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ACTION A-01

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 ABF-01 OPR-02 M-02 /014 W

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R 221054Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6998

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 9701

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: AFIN CB

SUBJECT: ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS AT PHNOM PENH

FOR ADMIN ASST. SECY. THOMAS FROM AMBASSADOR

1. I WOULD LIKE TO ENLIST YOUR ASSISTANCE IN GETTING ANSWERS TO SOME OF THE SUGGESTIONS I HAVE MADE TO THE EAST ASIAN BUREAU ON ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS OF THIS POST. IT WOULD APPEAR THAT SOME OF THE ANSWERS HAVE BOGGED DOWN IN THE BUREAUCRACY AND HAVE NOT LED TO ANY CONCRETE RESULTS SO FAR. I DON'T THINK THERE IS ANY NEED TO DWELL ON THE PHYSICAL AND SECURITY CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH AMERICAN PERSONNEL WORK IN PHNOM PENH. OTHER POSTS UNDOUBTEDLY ALSO HAVE HARDSHIPS BUT I DOUBT WHETHER THEY ARE ENDEMIC AND AS LONG-LASTING AS THOSE EXISTING HERE.

2. THE FIRST ISSUE I WOULD LIKE TO GET AN ANSWER ON IS OUR SUGGESTION FOR A PREFERENTIAL EXCHANGE RATE FOR OFFICIAL TRANSACTIONS AS WELL AS ACCOMMODATION EXCHANGE. I FIRST RAISED THIS PROBLEM ON APRIL 16, 1974. WE FINALLY RECEIVED A REPLY ON JUNE 28, 1974 (STATE 138844) WHICH RAISED A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS. THESE QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED (PHNOM PENH 9294, JULY 11, 1974). SINCE SENDING OUR LATEST PLEA FOR A POSITIVE REPLY ON THE PREFERENTIAL EXCHANGE RATE, WE HAVE NOT HEARD A WORD. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN DO TO PRY LOOSE A REPLY FROM WASHINGTON?

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3. THE SECOND PROBLEM IS THE GRANTING OF A 25 PERCENT

DIFFERENTIAL FOR THE CHIEF OF MISSION IN PHNOM PENH. MY CONCERN IS NOT THE SIZE OF MY OWN PAY CHECK, BUT EQUITY FOR MY SENIOR ASSISTANTS WHO CARRY THE EXECUTIVE BURDEN OF ADMINISTERING THIS MISSION'S PROGRAMS. IN FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR, TOM ENDERS CABLED A LOG APPEAL TO WASHINGTON URGING THAT THE DEPARTMENT GRANT THE CHIEF OF MISSION IN CAMBODIA THE OPTION OF COLLECTING THE 25 PERCENT HARDSHIP DIFFERENTIAL RATHER THAN ACCUMULATING TIME AND A HALF TOWARD RETIREMENT FOR SERVICE IN PHNOM PENH. AS YOU KNOW, NO OFFICER AT THIS POST CAN EARN MORE THAN THE CHIEF OF MISSION'S SALARY MINUS \$100. SINCE MY SALARY IS \$38,000, A NUMBER OF OFFICERS AT THIS POST (FSO/R 1 OR 2) DO NOT COLLECT THE FULL 25 PERCENT DIFFERENTIAL HARDSHIP PAY BECAUSE THEY WOULD EXCEED THE \$37,900 CEILING. MY COLLEAGUE IN SAIGON IS COLLECTING THE 25 PERCENT HARDSHIP DIFFERENTIAL. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE DECISION WAS TAKEN MANY MONTHS AGO TO GIVE OFFICIAL AMERICAN PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO THE KHMER REPUBLIC THE SAME BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO AMERICAN PERSONNEL IN VIET NAM. THIS DECISION APPARENTLY HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED AS CONCERNS THE PAYMENT OF THE 25 PERCENT HARDSHIP DIFFERENTIAL TO THE CHIEF OF MISSION IN PHNOM PENH. THIS CAUSES SEVERE HARSHIPS ON SOME OF THE SENIOR AMERICAN PERSONNEL AT THIS MISSION. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN DO TO RECTIFY THIS SITUATION?

4. ANOTHER WAY OF INCREASING THE COMPENSATION OF THE AMERICAN PERSONNEL AT THIS POST IS TO UPGRADE THE CLASSIFICATION OF EMBASSY PHNOM PENH TO A CLASS II POST. IT IS PRESENTLY A CLASS III EMBASSY WHICH PUTS IT IN THE SAME CATEGORY AS KUALA LUMPUR, RANGOON AND BAMAKO. IN LAOS, WHICH IS A CLASS II POST, WE ADMINISTERED AN OVERALL COUNTRY PROGRAM OF 375 MILLION DOLLARS. IN CAMBODIA TOTAL AMERICAN PROGRAMS AMOUNT TO ABOUT 650 MILLION DOLLARS PER YEAR CURRENTLY. I HAVE 200 AMERICANS WORKING FOR ME AT THIS MISSION. THE REASON I DON'T HAVE A LARGER STAFF IS THE LEGISLATIVE CEILING IMPOSED ON THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS WHO CAN BE PRESENT IN THE KHMER REPUBLIC AT ONE TIME. I SHOULD
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ADD THAT THIS IS A FULLY-INTERGRADED MISSION AND THE CHIEF OF MISSION HERE DIRECTLY SUPERVISES EVERY SINGLE AMERICAN REGARDLESS WHETHER HE IS MILITARY OR CIVILIAN, AND REGARDLESS OF AGENCY AFFILIATION. THE CHIEF OF MISSION IS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN EVERY ASPECT OF THE DIFFERENT AMERICAN PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT IN THE KHMER REPUBLIC. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS REPUBLIC ARE MUCH DEEPER AND OF MUCH GREATER IMPORTANCE TO THE UNITED

STATES THAN THOSE OF MOST TRADITIONAL DIPLOMATIC POSTS AROUND THE WORLD OF CLASS II AND EVEN SOME OF CLASS I RANK. IT IS INCONCEIVABLE TO ME THAT THE DEPARTMENT RANKS PHNOM PENH AS A CLASS III POST; IT MAY HAVE BEEN THAT IN 1960 OR 1970, BUT IT IS NOT IN 1974. AGAIN, MY CONCERN IS NOT WITH MY MONTHLY PAY CHECK. BY ELEVATING THIS POST TO CLASS II IT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR MORE OF THE SENIOR STAFF TO COLLECT THE FULL 25 PERCENT HARDSHIP PAY TO WHICH THEY ARE RIGHTFULLY ENTITLED.

5. THESE ARE NOT EASY PROBLEMS I AM PLACING ON YOUR DOORSTEP. HOWEVER, I WAS ASSURED BEFORE ASSUMING MY RESPONSIBILITIES IN PHNOM PENH THAT I COULD COUNT ON THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT IN WHAT WAS ACKNOWLEDGED TO BE PERHAPS THE MOST DIFFICULT ASSIGNMENT IN THE FOREIGN SERVICE. ANYTHING YOU CAN DO TO HELP US TO GET ANSWERS FROM THE BUREAUCRACY WOULD BE MUCH APPRECIATED BY THE ENTIRE STAFF AT THIS POST.
DEAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: boyleja
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974PHNOM09701
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740197-0283
From: PHNOM PENH
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740729/aaaaayel.tel
Line Count: 135
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION A
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUL 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <20 FEB 2003 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS AT PHNOM PENH FOR ADMIN ASST. SECY. THOMAS FROM AMBASSADOR
TAGS: AFIN, CB
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005